

OBITUARY

SIR KEITH CANTLIE, K.C.I.E., I.C.S.

Indian entomology suffered a severe loss with the death of Sir Keith Cantlie, at the age of 91, on April 29, 1977. He belonged to that great band of British public servants in India for whom India became a second home and motherland—every Christmas he brought me up to date with a long synopsis of Assam affairs, and even at Christmas 1976 his comments and predictions were as clear as ever. For men such as Cantlie the life around them was of absorbing interest, and everything about it had to be savoured and, where necessary, explored and defined. A selection from his written work well illustrates this broad interest: a volume on the Customary Law of the Khasis, the book "Assam in Former Times", a monograph on the Revenue Laws of Assam and numerous notes in the *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society*, culminating in the revised edition of the *Lycaenidae* section of Evan's "Identification of Indian Butterflies", published by the Society.

Cantlie must have inherited his gifted mind from his equally talented father, Sir James Cantlie, K.B.E., F.R.C.S., the founder and first president of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene. He passed the I.C.S. examination in 1909 and was first posted to the short-lived amalgamated province of East Bengal and Assam, subsequently being placed on the Assam list. After war time service with a Mahratta battalion and later in Mesopotamia and Persia he was appointed in 1922 President of the Manipur State Durbar, and it was this appointment which probably shaped

his future life and interests. It was at that period that he started collecting and studying butterflies in Manipur and Naga Hills, but though he never lost interest his busy service life—among other posts he was Commissioner of the Assam Valley 1937-42 and later a member of the Assam Revenue Tribunal—precluded much entomological work until his retirement. When the Japanese war threatened Assam he raised a Labour Corps of Khasis, and his last public service was as chairman of the Assam Public Service Commission. For his notable war time services he was awarded a knighthood.

Lady Cantlie died in 1945 and this made the decision to stay on in Shillong at the end of the war an easy one. At last he was able to pursue his interest in butterflies wholeheartedly, making frequent collecting trips in the Khasi Hills and Angami Naga country as well as buying butterflies from local collectors and dealers. This phase of his life was sadly terminated at Jhakama where he slipped on the steps of the inspection bungalow and fractured a knee cap, leaving him with a "gamey leg" which plagued him for the rest of his life and necessitated a final return to England. In London he worked equally hard at the British Museum of Natural History, going laboriously through General Tytler's tins of Manipur and Naga Hills papered specimens dating from around 1912, and eventually typing out and preparing for publication his revision of "Evans", a thoroughly exhausting and trying job at his then advanced age.

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I was first introduced to Cantlie in 1947, and I owe an enormous debt to his warm encouragement and leading on of one who had great enthusiasm but little knowledge. No trouble was too great for him, and when he left Assam he checked all my doubtful specimens against British Museum material, often obtaining the advice of Brigadier Evans and Graham Howarth. One of the greatest pleasures of my life was to name my first "new" species *Ypthima cantliei*, in acknowledgement of his help and friendship and to honour for all time a very great man whose kindly manner, warm-hearted enthusiasm and sense of humour enriched the lives of all around him.

T. NORMAN

Articles and notes published by the late Sir Keith Cantlie in the Society's *Journal*

- More Butterflies of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Assam. Vol. 51:42.
Hesperiidae of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. Vol. 54:212.
A new variety of the butterfly *Rapala rissa ranta* Swinhoe. Vol. 56:652.
Butterfly notes from Assam: The undescribed female of *Ypthima atra*. Vol. 58:296.
Hesperiidae *Halpe scissa* sp. nov. Vol. 58:532.
Genitalia of the butterfly genus *Spindasis* Wallengren. Vol. 60:466.
Hesperiidae: *Polytemis minuta* Evans. Vol. 60:747.
Genitalia of the butterfly genera *Surendra* Moore and *Everes* Hubner. Vol. 61:201.
Genitalia of butterflies of the Hesperiid Genus *Caltoris* as figured by Evans. Vol. 64:580.

PATRICK DONALD STRACEY (1906-1977)

Born on January 31, 1906, Patrick Donald Stracey secured his M.A. degree from Bangalore University and joined the Assam Forest Department as an Assistant Conservator of Forests on 9th November 1930, after being recruited to the Indian Forest Service. Two years later on the 5th February, 1933, he was promoted to the rank of the Deputy Conservator of Forests.

From 1934 Mr. Stracey was put in charge of the elephant hunting (*Kheda, Mela*) operations in different parts of Assam. It was during these operations, which kept him occupied for more than 8 years, that he learned all about the elephant wild and domesticated that made him one of the greatest experts on elephants in the World. During this period he was well known to almost all the famous 'Mahalders', 'Mahouts' and 'Phandis' of Assam and collected from them all the information on the methods of elephant catching

operations in Assam, past and present. The record catch of 892 and 437 elephants in stockade operations in Mokakchang in Nagaland during 1935 and 1936 respectively stand to his credit to this day. His famous book 'Elephant Gold' is a testimony to his knowledge of the animal.

After serving for several years in the elephant catching operations he worked as the Divisional Forest Officer in different divisions of Assam and during this period became well known as a great sportsman and hunter in Assam. The record pair of elephant tusks from the Goalpara Forests displayed in the Assam Assembly House today were presented by him. The first sports stadium in Assam was established at Jorhat in 1951 by his untiring efforts. The National Sports Club of Assam and the Gauhati Stadium owe much to his pioneer selfless efforts. He was a good cricketer and golfer.